

# SCHOLARS AT RISK

N E T W O R K

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
c/o H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaei, Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations  
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October 1, 2010

## **Re: Nasrin Sotoudeh**

Your Excellency:

I write on behalf of the Scholars at Risk Network to express grave concern over reports that Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, respected human rights lawyer and winner of the first annual Human Rights Prize awarded by Human Rights International, has been wrongfully detained and is being held in solitary confinement in Evin Prison. We respectfully urge you to intervene to ensure her well-being pending her earliest release, including ensuring immediate and regular access to legal counsel of her choosing, to family and to any necessary medical treatment.

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of over 240 universities and colleges in 29 countries dedicated to promoting academic freedom and its constituent freedoms of thought, opinion, expression, association and travel. In cases like Ms. Sotoudeh's involving alleged infringement of these freedoms, Scholars at Risk investigates hoping to clarify and resolve matters favorably.

Scholars at Risk has learned that Ms. Sotoudeh, prominent human rights lawyer whose clients include Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, was arrested on September 4<sup>th</sup> after receiving a summons to appear in court. According to Amnesty International, Ms. Sotoudeh's husband received threats over the past several months warning him that his wife risked arrest if she continued to defend Shirin Ebadi. International reports indicate that her office and house were searched on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Formal charges have yet to be issued against Ms. Sotoudeh, but she is reportedly suspected of "spreading propaganda" and "colluding to harm state security".

Scholars at Risk understands that, since her arrest, Ms. Sotoudeh has reportedly been held in solitary confinement in Evin Prison, without access to her lawyer or medical care. Reports also indicate that Ms. Sotoudeh has not been permitted visits with her husband or children; indeed we understand that she has only been allowed one phone call to her family on September 8<sup>th</sup>. All of this suggests apparent disregard of international standards of due process, fair trial and detention, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is signatory.

Ms. Sotoudeh's arrest raises grave concerns for her well-being. The suddenness of her arrest and the lack of any clear basis for her detention raise concerns not only about her situation but about the about intimidation of intellectuals generally in Iran and about the ability to conduct world-class research, teaching and scholarship in such an environment. These are suggestions we find particularly distressing given both Iran's rich intellectual history and the important role that Iran and Iranian scholars in particular could play in the development of knowledge, research and scholarship in the 21st century.

We therefore join with the many national and international academic associations, human rights organizations and individual scholars in respectfully urging you to ensure that Iran's obligations under international law are upheld with regard to Ms. Sotoudeh. We implore you to examine the circumstances of Ms. Sotoudeh's arrest and detention, and pending her earliest release, to guarantee her well-being and to ensure that she is granted immediate access to legal counsel of her choosing, to family and to any necessary medical treatment.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Robert Quinn  
Executive Director

CC:

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